

GRAEFF PRIZE ESSAY—1880.

The Deserted Village

OF

OLIVER GOLDSMITH,

BY

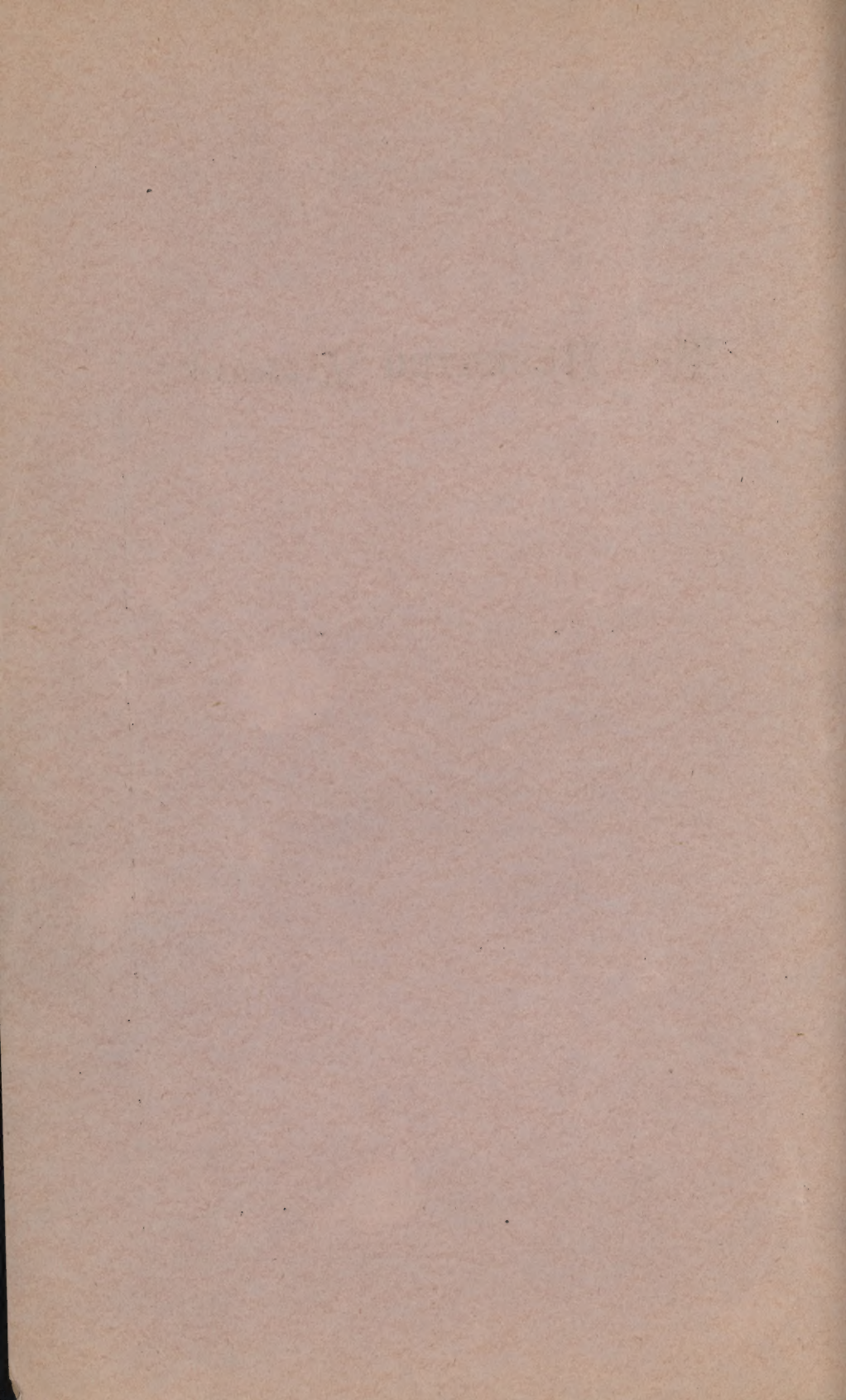
MILLARD F. TROXELL,

Class of '80.

PENNSYLVANIA COLLEGE.

GETTYSBURG:

J. E. WIBLE PRINTER, COR. OF WASHINGTON AND NORTH STREETS. E
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Compliments of the author.

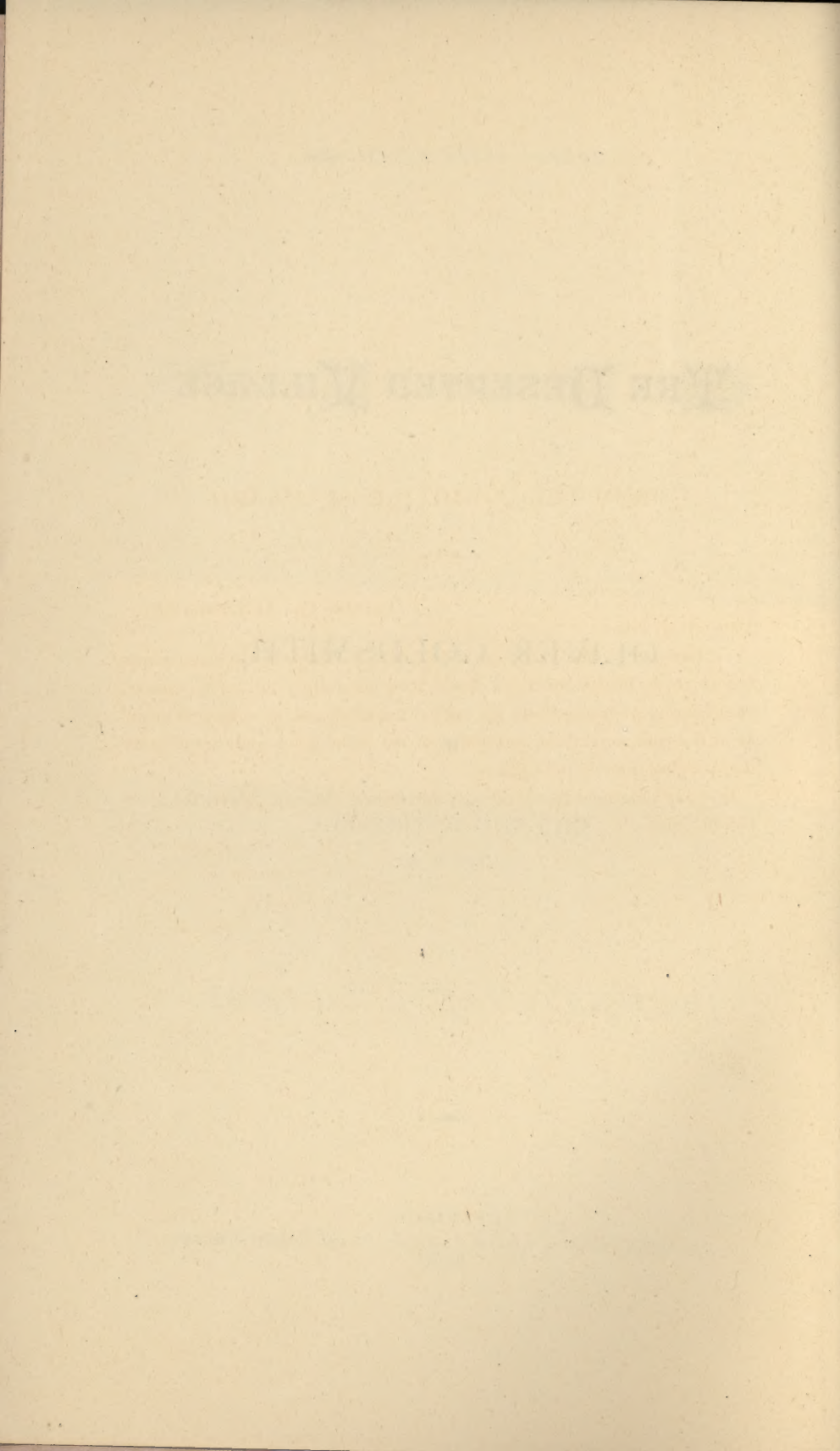
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FROM THE COMMITTEE OF AWARD.

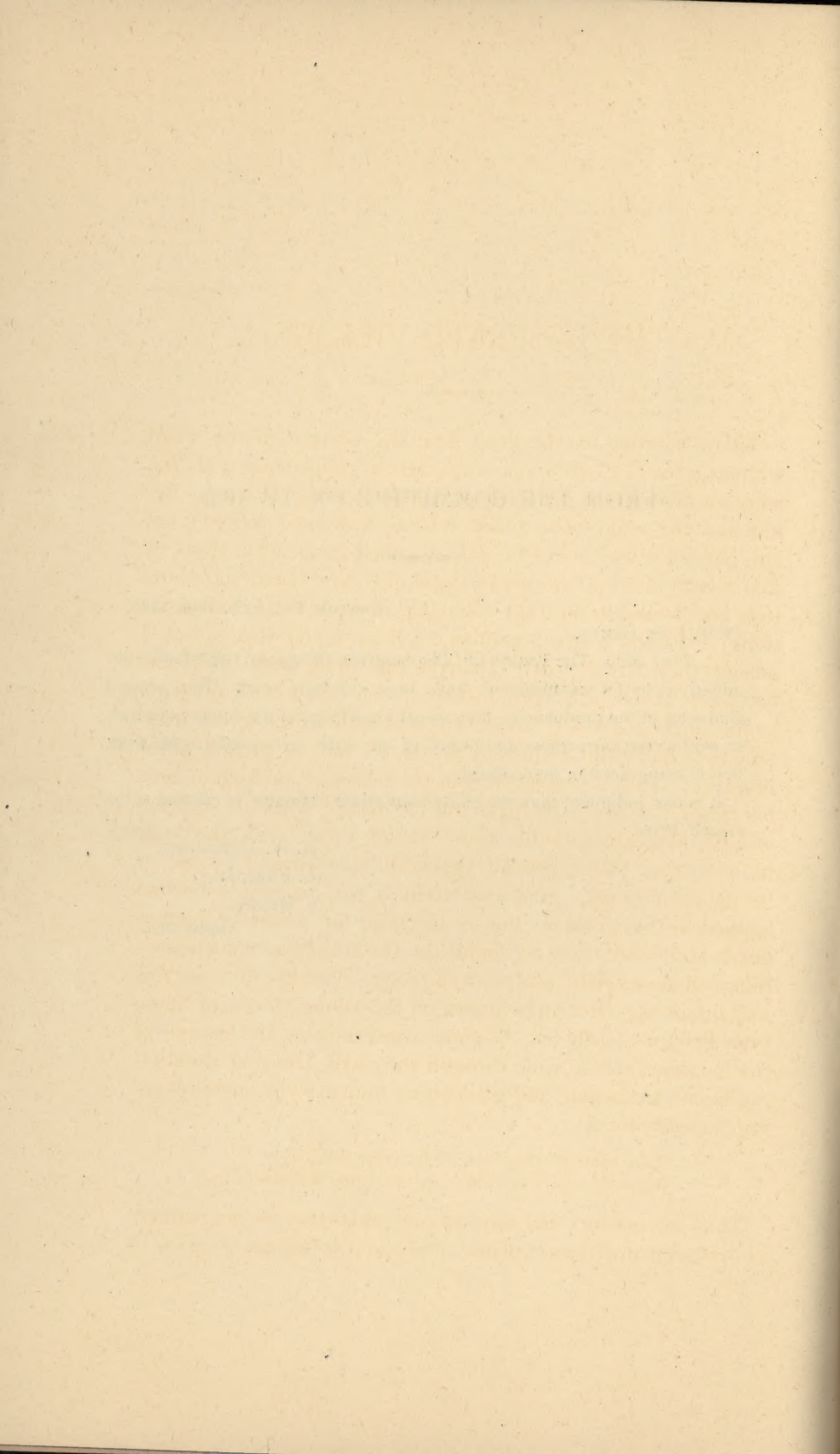
EASTON, PA., Feb. 28th, 1880.

PROF. J. A. HIMES.

Dear Sir: The Essays on *The Deserted Village* of Goldsmith, submitted to us for examination, have been carefully read. The general character of the productions, the critical knowledge of the subject evinced, as well as the correctness and purity of the style, are a credit to the work that is being done in the College.

It is our judgment that the Essay subscribed "Momus" is entitled to the Graeff Prize.

H. W. MCKNIGHT,
E. FERRIER,
S. HENRY,
Committee.



THE DESERTED VILLAGE.

Titian, painting for the third time the portrait of the "man without a tear," Charles the Fifth, while conversing with the emperor allowed his pencil to slip suddenly from his hand. Before any one could make a motion Charles stooped, picked it up, and handed it to Titian who was stupefied and embarrassed at this attention from the great emperor. Nor could the courtiers understand it; until the ruler said in reply to their observations: "I know a great number of Princes and Kings, but I believe there are not two Titians in the whole world." Titian had found that which many had sought in vain to find, the path to the emperor's heart. And thus it is with all the great masters, they find paths to human hearts, as well of princes as of peasants. This is true whether it be spoken of an Angelo with his chisel, a Titian with his brush, a Mozart with his melody, or a Shakespeare with his pen. To all these, with the long train of those they represent, the world is indebted for some of its happiest hours. And that term is not meaningless when applied to the world in this connection, for wherever human hearts are found, there are found also the enlightening and ennobling influences of art, sculpture and song. Whether the fountains well up among Grecian columns, on the sunny slopes of Italy, from Britain's lordly isle, or under western skies, the streams of the fountains spread wide through the earth, arousing slumbering talent, freshening and gladdening human lives, and awakening remembrances

"Like some vision olden, of far other time,
When the age was golden, in the young world's prime."

Thus the masters find ways to our hearts that we can scarcely understand, much less explain. Perhaps it is because so many of

the masters themselves were so human. This we often seem to forget. Who can say that Milton's blindness, Pope's deformity, our own brilliant Poe's slavish appetites, did not give them each a nearer approach to humanity's heart.

Goldsmith, with whom we are to commune for awhile, had from the first ample opportunity to study human nature. Born in Ireland of very poor parents—his father being a village clergyman—we are told that Goldsmith in his boyhood gave no indications of his future greatness. His naturally uninviting features were not improved by an attack of small pox, which left its marks upon his face. An older brother having exhausted the scant funds of the family in his education, Oliver made his way through Trinity College, Dublin, as a sizar, or poor scholar. The peculiar dress and menial service of this class of students could scarcely be thought to inspire one of Goldsmith's temperament with a lofty manhood; and it is probably owing to his wretched, humiliating life in College that he did not develop into a finer gentleman afterwards. While in College he wrote and sold ballads to help pay his expenses.

After taking his degree, and after some little preparation, he applied for ministerial ordination, but was indignantly refused; some say on account of a pair of bright scarlet breeches which he wore. An uncle, having pity for him, gave Goldsmith the means for going to London to make of himself a lawyer. On his way thither he lost all his money by gambling. Having given up the legal profession, he next devoted himself to the study of medicine, but his aimless spirit did not permit him to go much further in medicine than he had gone in law and in theology. He ran away from the bailiffs and his debts and fled to the continent. There he wandered on foot through France, Germany, Switzerland and Italy, "examined mankind more nearly and saw both sides of the picture," as he himself says, and after two years returned to England and to London, where he began his brilliant literary career.

Opinions differ much concerning this man of genius—for genius he certainly had, whatever else may be said of him. Dr. Johnson speaks of him thus: "No man was more foolish when he had not a pen in his hand, or more wise when he had. It

is amazing how little he knows. He seldom comes where he is not more ignorant than any one else." In contrast with this Sir Joshua Reynolds says: "Yet there is no man whose company is more liked." Sir Walter Scott: "He was a friend to virtue, and in his most playful pages never forgets what is due to it. He had the generosity of a disposition which knew no bounds but his last guinea." Thackeray: "Think of him reckless, thoughtless, vain if you like—but merciful, gentle, generous, full of love and pity." Macaulay: "There was in his character much to love, but little to respect. He was vain, sensual, frivolous, profuse, improvident." Boswell: "No man had the art of displaying with more advantage as a writer, whatever literary acquisitions he made." Walpole, who admired his writings, calls him "an inspired idiot." Garrick said of him that he was a man

—"for shortness called Noll,

Who wrote like an angel, and talked like poor Poll."

Was ever mortal so praised and blamed, so tenderly and yet so roughly handled by the critics? What a strange admixture, what a queer anomaly, what a bundle of inconsistencies must have been encased in that famous peach-blossom coat! For very pity of him we should give poor Goldsmith a hearing.

But this should be the least motive for becoming acquainted with Goldsmith. As has been said, he had peculiar advantages for studying human nature, and his success in literature proved that he made good use of these advantages. "In everything he wrote, prose or verse, serious or comic, there is a peculiar delicacy and purity of sentiment. * * No quality in his writings is more striking than the union of grotesque humor with pure, pensive tenderness."* Though he might as well be named among the novelists, the historians, or the ethical writers, we place him among the poets. Not because he was like Dryden, who says,

"I'll versify in spite and do my best
To make as much waste paper as the rest."

Rather because he seemed to feel like an older bard (Cowley) who speaks thus:

* Shaw's "Eng. Literature."

"Poet and saint, to thee alone were given
The two most sacred names of earth and heaven."

Knowing this much of Goldsmith, we approach *The Deserted Village*, pronounced by some his finest work. The poem was first published in 1770, and its early popularity can scarcely be doubted from the fact that five editions were immediately exhausted. "It was received with universal admiration, as one of the most fascinating and beautiful effusions of British genius."* On hearing it read the gentle Gray, more generous to Goldsmith than Goldsmith had proved to Gray, exclaimed with enthusiasm: "That man is a poet!" The opening lines of the poem take us at once to the scene; and somehow or other, we seem to look down upon the village from a neighboring hill, whose brow we have just surmounted:

"Sweet Auburn! loveliest village of the plain,
Where health and plenty cheer'd the labouring swain,
Where smiling Spring its earliest visit paid,
And parting Summer's lingering blooms delay'd."

Let it be borne in mind that "Auburn" is Lissoy, the pretty little village in the county of Westmeath, Ireland, where Goldsmith was born and where he passed his youthful days. It is his home, the home of his boyhood, to which the poet takes us. He recalls the scenes and events of days that have passed, scenes and events of which he himself has vivid, personal remembrances. He is describing his home. No wonder, then, that he finds the pathway to human hearts. No wonder that we seem to see before us the village, "loveliest of the plain;" no wonder that there seems to be something in the very words of the poet like "link'd sweetness long drawn out."

"Dear lovely bowers of innocence and ease,
Seats of my youth, when every sport could please,—
How often have I loiter'd o'er thy green,
Where humble happiness endear'd each scene!
How often have I paused on every charm,
The shelter'd cot, the cultivated farm,
The never-failing brook, the busy mill,
The decent church that topp'd the neighbouring hill,

* N. Amer. Review, Vol. 70.

The hawthorne bush, with seats beneath the shade,
For talking age and whispering lovers made!"

In these opening lines, which we purposely quote without omitting even one, there is a directness of description that is seldom found even in verse. Goldsmith here pictures the rural English village of his day in masterly style, giving the cot, the farm, the brook, the mill, the church, each its place, and admirably describing each with a single word.

The next few lines show us the peaceful quiet of evening in the village,

"When toil remitting lent its turn to play."

The sports and frolics of the young, the mild, beholding gaze of the old, the dancing pair, the mistrustless swain, the bashful virgin with sidelong looks of love, the matron's reproving glance,

"These were thy charms, sweet village! sports like these,
With sweet succession, taught e'en toil to please."

Such was village life in England, according to Goldsmith, in the first half of the eighteenth century. Such was Lissoy, his native place, which he uses as the type. But there comes a change, even as "all things human change." The aim of the poem is not only beautifully to picture scenes that have existed, and thus to delight the fancy. There is another side, and a touch of sadness reaches us and lingers about us in the line,

"These were thy charms, but all these charms have fled."

Something of Goldsmith's power is shown in the description that follows, of the utter desolation which now saddens the once smiling village. Some tyrant's hand has been at work, and now there is, in the whole domain, one only master, and that—desolation. Here are just a few lines of this striking description:

"No more thy glassy brook reflects the day,
But choked with sedges works its weedy way;
Along thy glades a solitary guest,
The hollow-sounding bittern guards its nest;
Amidst thy desert walks the lapwing flies,
And tires their echoes with unvaried cries."

The cause for this desolation Goldsmith sees, or thinks he sees, in the accumulation of wealth and the occupation of large

territories or tracts of land by rich lords and princes. Without halting now to consider whether Goldsmith was right or wrong in this view—he doubtless thought he was right—we will run through the thread of the poem.

In ascribing the cause of this desolation to the accumulation of wealth and decay of strong manhood Goldsmith seems to be intensely in earnest. He makes some sweeping statements which we attribute to poetic license rather than to his lack of knowledge. He also states some pointed truths, as when he says,

“—a bold peasantry, their country's pride,
When once destroyed, can never be supplied.”

He says there was a time in England “when every rood of ground maintained its man,” and says too that this was before her griefs began, when a man's best riches were “ignorance of wealth.”

“But times are alter'd; trade's unfeeling train
Usurp the land, and dispossess the swain;”

and instead of the humble hamlet is the stately mansion. Many of the peasants are no longer able to support themselves and their families, and

“These, far departing, seek a kinder shore,
And rural mirth and manners are no more.”

The poet now turns us again to “Sweet Auburn,” and as we walk with him through the tangled paths and ruined grounds, viewing the spot where once stood the cottage and the hawthorn tree,

“Remembrance wakes with all her busy train.”

In words of exquisite tenderness, that must find a responsive chord in the human heart, Goldsmith tells us of the hopes and dreams of his youth.

“In all my wanderings round this world of care,
In all my griefs—and God has given my share—
I still had hopes, my latest hours to crown,
Amidst these humble bowers to lay me down.
I still had hopes, for pride attends us still,
Amidst the swains to show my book-learn'd skill,
Around my fire an evening group to draw,
And tell of all I felt, and all I saw;

And, as a hare, whom hounds and horns pursue,
 Pants to the place from whence at first he flew,
 I still had hopes, my long vexations past,
 Here to return—and die at home at last."

Goldsmith was right; he had his share of griefs, and we think almost more than his share. However precious the results of his wayward life to posterity, the greatest reality to himself that life afforded was the almost unmingled bitterness of failure. Even the hope so tenderly expressed in the lines just quoted was denied him. He speaks somewhere else of those who daily escape famine, yet "are known to die at last of a disorder in reality caused by hunger, but which in the common language is called a broken heart." He himself hungered to the last, and Dr. Johnson says his death was hastened and made more violent from his uneasiness of mind. In his dying hour, when his physician asked if his mind was at ease, he replied "*No—it is not*," and thus the flickering light of his life went out from the world.

Turning again to the poem we come upon a pretty tribute to retirement, when, after a youth of labor, old age is crowned with ease and resignation, which gently slope the way to the grave. The poet again bemoans the absence of all the sounds and signs of population, saying that "all the bloomy flush of life is fled," except

—"yon widow'd solitary thing,
 That feebly bends beside the plashy spring.
 * * * * * *
 She only left of all the harmless train,
 The sad historian of the pensive plain."

These lines are musical to a high degree, though they strike our ears with a mournful melody, for, as the cause of the harmony, we see the widow, poor "solitary thing," forced in age to strip the brook of its "mantling cresses" for bread, and picking from the thorn "her wintry faggots." Goldsmith could well appreciate the wants and anxieties of the poor. His was not a nature to turn away those who needed his aid when he had the means to help.

By an easy and natural transition, caused probably by thoughts of "the sad historian" just named, the poet gives sev-

eral well drawn biographical and historical sketches of village life that are not at all peculiar to Auburn. These sketches indeed are so well drawn that we instinctively find names for them in our own recollections. The preacher, the school master, the village inn! Who cannot give names to these? Who cannot remember the time when he regarded the preacher with awe, the school master with trembling respect, the inn as the *ne plus ultra* of indolent manhood? Ah! just here lies the success of the poet—he is natural, and because he is natural he finds the path to our heart and stirs up buried recollections of long ago, recollections that our now acute memory had well-nigh let slip.

Goldsmith's preacher may almost be called a part of himself. Indeed, we are not sure that he is not, "for," says John Forster, in his life of Goldsmith, "they who have loved, laughed and wept with the man in black of the *Citizen of the World*, the Preacher of *The Deserted Village* and Doctor Primrose in the *Vicar of Wakefield*, have given laughter, love and tears to the Rev. Chas. Goldsmith." It speaks well for Goldsmith, as well as his father, that the latter is incorporated in so many of the writings of his famous son. That such is the case many of the best critics agree. The preacher of *The Deserted Village* draws from the poet some of the finest and grandest of his powers. He pictures the preacher's home, his holy calling, his devotion to his work, his kindness toward all, modestly and reverently.

"Unskilful he to fawn, or seek for power,
By doctrines fashion'd to the varying hour;
Far other aims his heart had learn'd to prize,
More bent to raise the wretched than to rise."

The preacher loves his people and his work, and is loved in turn. He is prompt at the call of duty, "watches and weeps, prays and feels for all"; and at church is described as meek, with unaffected grace, while the truth came from his lips with such power that,

—"fools, who came to scoff, remained to pray."

The poet has the right conception of the ministerial office, and when in the closing lines he eulogizes the firm foundation and sure strength of the minister he rises even to sublimity:

"As some tall cliff, that lifts its awful form,
 Swells from the vale, and midway leaves the storm,
 Though round its breast the rolling clouds are spread,
 Eternal sunshine settles on its head."

There are fifty-six lines given to the portrayal of the preacher, and Goldsmith rightly appreciates the importance of the office in his poem, if not in fact. For he says of himself, "As I take my shoes from the shoemaker, and my coat from the tailor, so I take my religion from the priest." From this it would seem that he valued religion rather lightly, yet it will be remembered that he applied for ordination as a preacher and failed to receive orders. This is but another one of those strange inconsistencies of which his life was full.

The schoolmaster next claims our attention. The lines given to this dignified character are perhaps the most pleasing of the whole poem. For the first time in this sketch Goldsmith allows his quaint, dry humor to crop out, and it comes so innocently and naturally, that we find ourselves smiling almost before we are aware of it. Of this master it was said, and it could just as well be said of all village schoolmasters,

"A man severe he was, and stern to view;
 I knew him well, and *every truant* knew:
 Well had the boding tremblers learn'd to trace
 The day's disasters in his morning face."

Of course the small school "laughed with counterfeited glee at all his jokes," of which article schoolmasters of every grade, even to the present day, keep on hand a stock. Of course too the hearers are always, even to the present day also, in duty bound to laugh. Human nature in this respect, as in many others, is much the same through all the centuries. Our master in the *Deserted Village* comes next after the preacher in the esteem of the worthy inhabitants, who declared how much he knew: and no wonder indeed, for

"'Twas certain he could write and cipher too."

And our chronicler further adds,

"In arguing too the parson own'd his skill,
 For e'en though vanquished, he could argue still;
 While words of learned length, and thundering sound,

Amazed the gazing rustics ranged around;
 And still they gazed, and still the wonder grew
 That one small head could carry all he knew."

This is a rather doubtful compliment to the learning of the village master, but Goldsmith was too familiar with human nature not to know that the semblance of wisdom often passes for the essence among the common people.

The third picture sketched is that of the village inn,

"Where village statesmen talk'd with looks profound."

This is the commonplace village tavern, with its ale, sanded floor, white-washed wall, old pictures, and broken china "wisely kept for show, ranged o'er the chimney." No doubt this was Goldsmith's favorite haunt in early manhood. Certain it is at all events that he was a frequenter of like places of resort throughout the whole period of his wandering and travel. Perhaps this is why he devotes fourteen lines to sorrowful regret that this tottering inn must sink into obscurity.

With this description and lament of the inn the distinctive narrative of the poem closes, and from this point to the end there is little else than a series of contrasts between the rich and the poor. In the striking comparisons which are here drawn Goldsmith plainly shows that he is a bitter antagonist of the wealthy classes and the capitalists. He delights in simple blessings, "spontaneous joys, where nature has its play," and cries down "the long pomp and midnight masquerade." He contrasts the effects of these two modes of living very forcibly, and there is not a little sober truth in the lines:

"E'en while fashion's brightest arts decoy
 The heart distrusting asks, if this be joy?"

He calls upon statesmen to judge how wide are the limits

"Between a splendid and a happy land."

He says wealth is but a name that does not alter useful products, and that the man of wealth

"Takes up a space that many poor supplied;
 Space for his lake, his park's extended bounds,
 Space for his horses, equipage and hounds;
 The robe that wraps his limbs in silken sloth
 Has robb'd the neighboring fields of half their growth."

He says that a land of luxury, splendors and palaces is like a "fair female" who, when the freshness of natural youth is past, and when lovers fail, seeks borrowed charms in which to shine forth,

"In all the glaring impotence of dress."

This comparison, the logic of which is rather doubtful, is followed by a personification of poverty. Driven from fenceless limits and bare-worn commons to seek a place of refuge in the city, Poverty finds himself even there a stranger in the crowded streets and nothing awaiting him but

"To see profusion, that he must not share ;
To see ten thousand baneful arts combined
To pamper luxury, or thin mankind ;
To see each joy the sons of pleasure know
Extorted from his fellow creature's woe."

Then follows a recital of one of those saddest of all scenes that darken and blight human lives, of one who once was innocent and

"Sweet as the primrose peeps beneath the thorn ;
Now lost to all ; her friends, her virtue fled."

The poet now starts the question as to where Auburn's people have gone. They have not perished from the earth, nor have they become beggars at proud men's doors, but

"To distant climes, a dreary scene,
Where half the convex world intrudes between,
Through torrid tracts with fainting steps they go,
Where wild Altama murmurs to their woe."

"Altama" of the *Deserted Village*, is the river Altamaha in the State of Georgia. It will be remembered that when the poem was written, as well as before and since, there was an exodus of the inhabitants from certain sections of Great Britain to the United States. Goldsmith takes advantage of this circumstance and, making the depopulation of the village appear to be the result of luxurious wealth possessed by few, as he does, he arouses our sympathy to the full for these poor refugees—as they might well be called—who are compelled to seek a home in such a region as is described. Hear his description of the land "where wild Altama murmurs :"

"Far different there from all that charm'd before,
The various terrors of that horrid shore ;
Those blazing suns that dart a downward ray,
And fiercely shed intolerable day ;
Those matted woods where birds forget to sing,
But silent bats in drowsy clusters cling ;
Those poisonous fields with rank luxuriance crown'd,
Where the dark scorpion gathers death around ;
Where at each step the stranger fears to wake
The rattling terrors of the vengeful snake ;
Where crouching tigers wait their hapless prey,
And savage men more murderous still than they ;
While oft in whirls the mad tornado flies,
Mingling the ravaged landscape with the skies."

This highly colored bit of description can certainly not be charged with holding out inducements for immigration to the land spoken of, nor will it, on the other hand, add anything to our estimation of Goldsmith's actual knowledge. The poet allows his imagination to supply more than the facts will warrant. True, in the south-eastern corner of the State of Georgia is a region or circuit which is described as "filled with pools and islands, covered with vines, bay trees, and underwood, and teeming with alligators, lizards, and other reptiles." (*Am. Cyclopædia*). This, which is a well authenticated statement, would seem highly enough drawn, but when compared with the description of Goldsmith, it appears tame. True, a poetic imagination must be allowed some license, but the most liberal license would scarcely have led a well-informed poet living in the latter half of the eighteenth century to place "crouching tigers," and "more murderous savage men," in the State of Georgia.

But we must hasten toward the end of the poem. Very tenderly the poet portrays the parting of father and daughter, husband and wife, as they take a long farewell. Then follows a stanza again bitterly denouncing luxury as the cause of all these changes. The poem fitly concludes with an apostrophe to Poetry into which Goldsmith seems to throw his whole soul. This apostrophe rightly gives "sweet Poetry" a lofty place in the heart and world, and is what we regard as the finest pas-

sage, the most musical as well as most powerful, in *The Deserted Village*. We therefore quote it entire.

"And thou, sweet Poetry, thou loveliest maid,
Still first to fly where sensual joys invade,
Unfit, in these degenerate times of shame,
To catch the heart, or strike for honest fame ;
Dear charming nymph, neglected and decried,
My shame in crowds, my solitary pride ;
Thou source of all my bliss, and all my woe,
That found'st me poor at first, and keep'st me so ;
Thou guide, by which the nobler arts excel,
Thou nurse of every virtue, fare thee well !
Farewell ! and oh ! where'er thy voice be tried,
On Torno's cliffs, or Pambamarca's side,
Whether where equinoctial fervors glow,
Or winter wraps the polar world in snow,
Still let thy voice, prevailing over time,
Redress the rigours of the inclement clime.
Aid slighted Truth with thy persuasive strain :
Teach erring man to spurn the rage of gain ;
Teach him, that states of native strength possess,
Though very poor, may still be blest ;
That trade's proud empire hastes to swift decay,
As ocean sweeps the labour'd mole away ;
While self-dependent power can time defy,
As rocks resist the billows and the sky."

In these last lines the poet becomes eloquent, and there is something inspiring in the thought that *Poetry* is to aid "slighted truth" and to "teach erring man." Here we have the true ideal as to what makes poetry, as to what gives it its power, as to what place it occupies in the poet's own conception of it. Doubtless it was this that was in the mind of Congreve, the brilliant poet of the early part of the eighteenth century whom Dryden named as his successor, when he wrote,

"Poets have undoubted right to claim
If not the greatest, the most lasting name."

Who can claim a more lasting name than he who would teach erring men and aid truth ? Goldsmith makes this the object of Poetry and for this we honor and love him.

The poem is ended. While reading it we seem to stand on the brow of the hill overlooking "Sweet Auburn," and to see all

the changes passing in panoramic succession before our eyes. And while we are thus looking on, with the poet at our side assigning his reasons for the giving up of the innocent sports, for the stopping of the mill, for the barrenness of the soil, for the desertion of the once peaceful and happy homes, we find ourselves full ready to sympathize with the thoughts and feelings to which Goldsmith gives utterance. We can readily understand and appreciate the poet's convictions. He is honest in his opinions, and yet, when he assigns the whole of the present inactivity, desolation and desertion of the village to the introduction of capital and wealth into the community, we cannot in the light of economical science as now developed agree with him. Herein lies one of the blemishes of the poem. Had Goldsmith been conversant with the science of Political Economy, which was being rapidly developed and taught while he was a sizar in Trinity College, he would scarcely have given so much stress to the introduction of money, and all that money buys, as the one supreme cause of the depopulation of the land. He rightly attacks indolent and luxurious ease, but wrongly attacks the building up of industries and the busy "trains of trade." As early as 1690 John Locke, in his "Two Treatises on Government," had partly established the great fundamental truth of all economical science, namely, that *only labor invests anything with value*; there may be utility, but no value, without labor. Says Locke: "It is labor that puts the greatest part of value upon land, without which it would scarcely be worth anything. * * Supposing the world given, as it was, to the children of men in common, we see how labor could make men distinct titles to the several parcels of it for their private uses." Locke also advanced true and sound principles in his tracts on the nature and uses of money. These principles afterward were more fully advanced and elaborated by Hume in his Political Essays published in 1752. A plentiful amount of solid money, no matter how distributed, is good for all classes. And the more spent by the wealthy in luxurious homes and on fine grounds and surroundings, the better for the laboring classes. Capital is not detrimental to labor. This is the teaching of all those economists accepted as having authority. And Gold-

smith, opposing freedom of exchange and manufacture and the introduction of wealth, as he does in *The Deserted Village*, is only giving expression to the murmurs of the communist of a hundred years later, of whose voice even now we distinctly hear the echo.

This is the only great fault of the poem, and this will not be considered a fault by some. It might be read, and doubtless has been read, numbers of times with this false idea of Political Economy unnoticed each time; for there is so much to charm and delight the sense that we do not think to be critical.

Some have charged the poet with a want of proper arrangement of parts. True, there is not a systematic fitting of part to part, nor is Goldsmith working for this mechanical effect. He means to reach our hearts, and he does it. Arranged in any other way than that in which it is, and which way we have threaded, it would probably seem tedious, and in the attacks made here and there on luxury, there would seem to be vain repetition. In the present form of the poem, there is no special abruptness in the transitions.

There is a remarkable absence of classical allusions, and of foreign phrases of any kind whatever. We take it that Goldsmith was neither a diligent student nor a great scholar. He gained most that he knew because he could not well help it, and it is his knowledge of human nature more than all else that gives him his power as a writer, and consequently his place in literature. Boswell was not at all his friend but perhaps does him justice when he says: "His mind resembled a fertile but thin soil. There was a quick, but not a strong vegetation, of whatever chanced to be thrown upon it. No deep root could be struck. The oak of the forest did not grow there; but the elegant shrubbery and the fragrant parterre appeared in gay succession."

Goldsmith was unlike any of the poets of his time, and his pen was so facile, so bright, so pathetic, so humorous, so musical, so sensible, so different from others, in one word so *human*, that his writings gave him a place in the rank and file of *litterateurs* that no one occupied before and no one has dared usurp since. We know not with whom to compare him. Some have

coupled the name of Gay with that of Goldsmith, but only to say that they were both children all their lives long. Pope's terse description of Gay, "in wit a man—simplicity a child," can just as accurately be applied to Goldsmith, but here the likeness between the two ceases. Others have connected the names of Germany and England in those of Schiller and Goldsmith. Here the likeness is indeed stronger. Both Schiller and Goldsmith were sensitive in early youth, both opened their hearts to the distressed, robbed themselves to relieve the destitute, and had similar fates to overcome. But while Schiller's genius was early recognized and he himself settled into a loving and loved home and manhood, "Goldsmith was a plant that flowered late," says Dr. Johnson; and whilst this may not be strictly true, it is true that he was without the refining, ennobling, mellowing influences of home life and home love. "His youth was without renown, his manhood without a home," yet he remained to the last, through all his trials and disappointments, as simple and as natural as though stirred by the fresh impulses of childhood.

There is in the *Deserted Village*, whatever else may be said of it, a sweet and pure morality. The poet is not only trying to please the sense and to delight the fancy, he is seriously and earnestly trying to teach, and to better the condition of the masses. He anticipated objections that would arise to his views, that some would say the depopulation he deplures and the miseries he laments existed only in the poet's own imagination; hence in dedicating the poem to Sir Joshua Reynolds he makes use of these words: "I have taken all possible pains to be certain of what I allege; and all my views and inquiries have led me to believe these miseries real, which I here attempt to display." The whole tone of the poem is that of serious earnestness. Elsewhere so full of wit and humor, in *The Deserted Village* Goldsmith only once allows his merry nature to bubble into expression, and then, for a few lines only, when recalling the scenes of the village school.

The aim of the poem is noble, and this review of it would be incomplete without at least mentioning the aptness of its descriptions to the present condition of things in the birth-land of

Goldsmith. Compare the miseries of Ireland's poor masses at this time (Feb. 1880) with the scenes pictured by the poet more than a hundred years ago; and as Goldsmith then said of some, so we, at this time, can perhaps more truly say of many in Ireland,

"E'en now, perhaps, by cold and hunger led,
At proud men's doors they ask a little bread."

The land of Goldsmith and Emmet is again under dark clouds, but we will not give up the hope that as heretofore, so now, the hand of the Eternal is overturning and shaping all things for the best, and that the same hand will finally lead to the light. Meanwhile the moral teachings of *The Deserted Village* should not be forgotten. And of Goldsmith let us forget his frailties, vices, and vanities, which are but the common share of humanity. We should rather think of his tenderness, love, and pity for the oppressed; think of him as one who, amid the troubles and storms of a homeless manhood, looked back to the scenes of his childhood and wrote these lines:

"In all my wanderings round this world of care,
In all my griefs—and God has given my share—
I still had hopes my latest hours to crown,
Amidst these humble bowers to lay me down;
I still had hopes, my long vexations pass'd,
Here to return—and die at home at last."

